R. McIlwraith E-5 (1922-1924) 1948
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ally until complete confidence was established, simplifying work in the field to an enormous extent. Equal trust could be placed on these men in other respects; articles of value were repeatedly left in their houses with the absolute certainty that they would be guarded with care. Some few individuals there were, however, who were neither honest nor trustworthy. Bella Coola religion is not concerned with ethics, but public opinion demands honour in dealing with relatives or friends. In former times, for example, debts incurred by an individual were considered a liability by his relations. If a man died after having goods on credit for a potlatch, his family were disgraced if they failed to pay his bills; now, unfortunately, nothing concerns the younger people, many of whom try to avoid meeting even their own debts, much less those of dead relatives. Individual conscience has not replaced the tribal and, more specifically, family influence. Dishonesty in small matters is not uncommon, particularly in dealing with white people who, according to the Bella Coola, were the first to extinguish. The older people bitterly lament the lack of morality of the younger and state, probably with some justification, that they would have been prevented by the open life which prevailed when several families shared a single house. On the whole, however, the average Bella Coola is probably no less honest than the average white man.

Individuals vary enormously in mental ability. In making this investigation, it was necessary to interview all the older people of the tribe. Disregarding those unwilling to provide information, it was found that some absolutely lacked the ability to explain matters with which they were familiar; some did not have sufficient patience to be good workers; some were so forgetful that they would omit necessary points in a story or account; some were downright stupid, whereas others displayed mental ability of no mean order. In reading ethnological literature, one is apt to think of the tractible experienced by the author, and to overlook the fact that natives have as

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grave difficulties in explaining their customs, as the white man has in understanding them. 153 124

The writer was impressed by the brilliance shown by several of the natives. Joshua Moody, for example, is essentially the philosopher. More individualistic than most of his fellowmen, he was one of the first to adopt Christianity and has been a faithful follower of the new creed. Deeply interested in religious questions, he has stored up what has been told him of the Bible and pondered deeply on all problems of life. Not particularly practical, subject to fits of anger or moroseness, but with a meditative temperament which delights in seeking biblical parallels and synonyms for Bella Coola practices, his is the kind of mind which, in other walks of life, would have produced the professor of philosophy. Jim Pollard is quite another type. Essentially practical, he has devoted his energies to keeping abreast of changing conditions. He is the best singer and composer in Bella Coola, the best canoeman for miles, he has learnt to handle a motor-boat engine, to sift prospectors for minerals, and has succeeded in amassing and saving a considerable amount of money. Jim excelled all other informants in clearness and logical presentation of his explanations, though he showed a slight tendency, intelligible enough, to gloss over aspects which he knew would be considered unpleasant. If Jim had been a white man, he would undoubtedly have made his mark in the world of business. The late Captain Schooner differed from either of the preceding. Older than they, and unconverted, he, perhaps, came nearest to the original, unencumbered Bella Coola type. Heavy in build, coarse in humour and expression, he had a heart of gold and was a fine example of a native gentleman. He was glad to assist most patiently in recording ancient lore, being intensely proud of the traditions of his ancestors. A friendship developed from this which is one of the writer's happiest memories. Often in the evenings life in general was discussed, the war, the rush of progress in big cities, the quest for wealth, the spread of white civilization, and the problems raised by the contact of peoples. 115 177 [133] [123]

[illegible] Schooner lacked the mental acumen of Joshua and Jim, but he revealed himself as a tribal patriarch, proud of his family's history and eager to assist his grandchildren and great-grandchildren, but feeling himself lost and helpless in the struggle before them. With sadness, but without bitterness, he used to speak of the approaching end of Bella Coola culture, and his words brought home the tragedy which the spread of civilization brings to so many, and the responsibility resting upon the white people as a whole.

[illegible] Until an intelligence test is devised to correlate the mental ability of the white man with that of the native, it is impossible to compare the two scientifically. None the less, the writer deliberately expresses the opinion that Joshua Moody and Jim Pollard are two of the most brilliant men he has met in any walk of life. They are undoubtedly the most able of the Bella Coola; others have only slightly less ability, while the mass of the population compares favourably with an average white community. Their ability, however, is definitely conditioned by their conservatism. Absolute trust in the traditions of their ancestors has checked speculation, so the established explanation is never questioned; new inventions, unauthorized by custom, have been regarded as almost sacrilegious; the force of public opinion, while valuable as a deterrent to anti-social practices, has effectively restrained innovations. The Bella Coola are a good example of a community where development has been completed by extreme conservatism fostered by religious beliefs.

[illegible] Taking into account the material obstacles, the achievements of these people have not been insignificant. In former times, provided only with tools of stone and unsmelted copper, they built graceful canoes, made watertight boxes, bowed planks from mighty cedars, and erected large houses which called for considerable engineering skill. Judged by native standards, their carving and painting lacked artistic delicacy, but it required no mean ability to portray even designs to mount their own standards. Passing from the purely mechanical

to the aesthete, their skill in dancing and dramatics is commendable: no one who has witnessed a native dance can fail to have been impressed by the performance of the participants and the stage craft of the carpenters. The fact that no system of writing had ever been devised has prevented the establishment of a native literature, but the practice of passing down an extensive folklore by word of mouth shows their memorising powers as well as their fondity for remembering details. At present it is difficult to appreciate what must have been their energy in earlier times when they faced the struggle for existence, armed with stone tools. Abundant salmon gave them a ubiquitous food, but only when weirs had been built with great labour. Though game was plentiful, the hunter was equipped with nothing more formidable than a bow and arrow. Even simplest task required patience and skill undreamed of by the average white man. If the reader will allow his imagination to carry him backwards two hundred years, he will realise that the mere provision of food and clothing necessitated constant effort and ceaseless exertion.

Hand in hand with many admirable characteristics, the Bella Coola display others which strike the white man as unprepossessing. A first impression is the untidiness of their houses. Externally, they are often fairly neat, but confusion reigns within. Clothing, instead of being hung up, is left lying on the floor; bed-coverings are piled carelessly; dirty dishes cover the tables, dogs and children crawl over the floor, flies abound; all is dirty and slovenly. The house itself may be uncomplicated; a window lacks glass and has been boarded up; the roof leaks, or the steps are falling down. Nor are the surroundings more attractive. There is no struggling flower-bed in the village, but elsewhere the houses are surrounded by stretches of mud where horses and cattle wander, dogs prowl, and children play. In the distance the mountains peaks rise in splendour, but near at hand all is squalid and unkempt.

They are only slightly more particular about their personal appearance. Men does not discuss them. They wash occa-